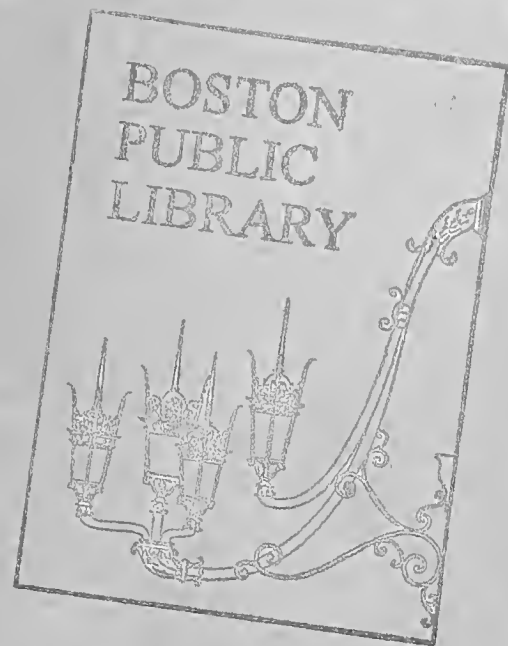


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BRA

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REPORT OF THE BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION
ON THE POTENTIAL DESIGNATION OF
12, 14, & 16 CARVER STREET

AS A LANDMARK

UNDER CHAPTER 772 OF THE ACTS OF 1975

Approved: Marion Thompson 12/3/79
Executive Director Date
Approved: Paulie Chastanet 12/3/79
Chairman Date

C69
B31

in place of

id: 77-145-101

Executive Director Date

Executive Director Date
d. Paulie Charette 5/3/19
Chairman

Date _____

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1.0 LOCATION OF THE PROPERTIES

1.1 Address: the proposed designation under consideration pertains to three buildings at 12,14, and 16 Carver Street, Boston, Ward 5; the assessor's parcel numbers are 21,20, and 19, respectively.

1.2 Area in Which the Property is Located:

The buildings, less than a block from Boston Common, are located in a transitional area among three clearly defined neighborhoods: Bay Village, a late Federal and Greek Revival residential area; Back Bay, a 19th century landfill project of national renown, now a mixture of residential, commercial, and institutional uses; and the downtown commercial district. The buildings are within the Park Plaza urban renewal area, whose project has undergone several major changes since the 1960's.

1.3 Map Showing Location: attached.



12, 14 & 16 Carver Street



CENTRAL
BURIAL
GROUND

BOYLSTON STREET

SQUARE

PARK

MONUMENT

ELIOT STREET

PARKING
AREA

PARKING
AREA

STREET

PARKING

STUART

TOWNSEND

PLACE

BOYLSTON PL.

ALLEN'S

WARRENTON

SEAVE

12, 14 & 16 Carver Street



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTIES2.1 Type and Use:

Numbers 12, 14, and 16 Carver Street were built as residences, perhaps for ground floor shops. Until recently, this mixed use continued with apartments on the upper floors and restaurants occupying the ground floors. The buildings are now vacant.

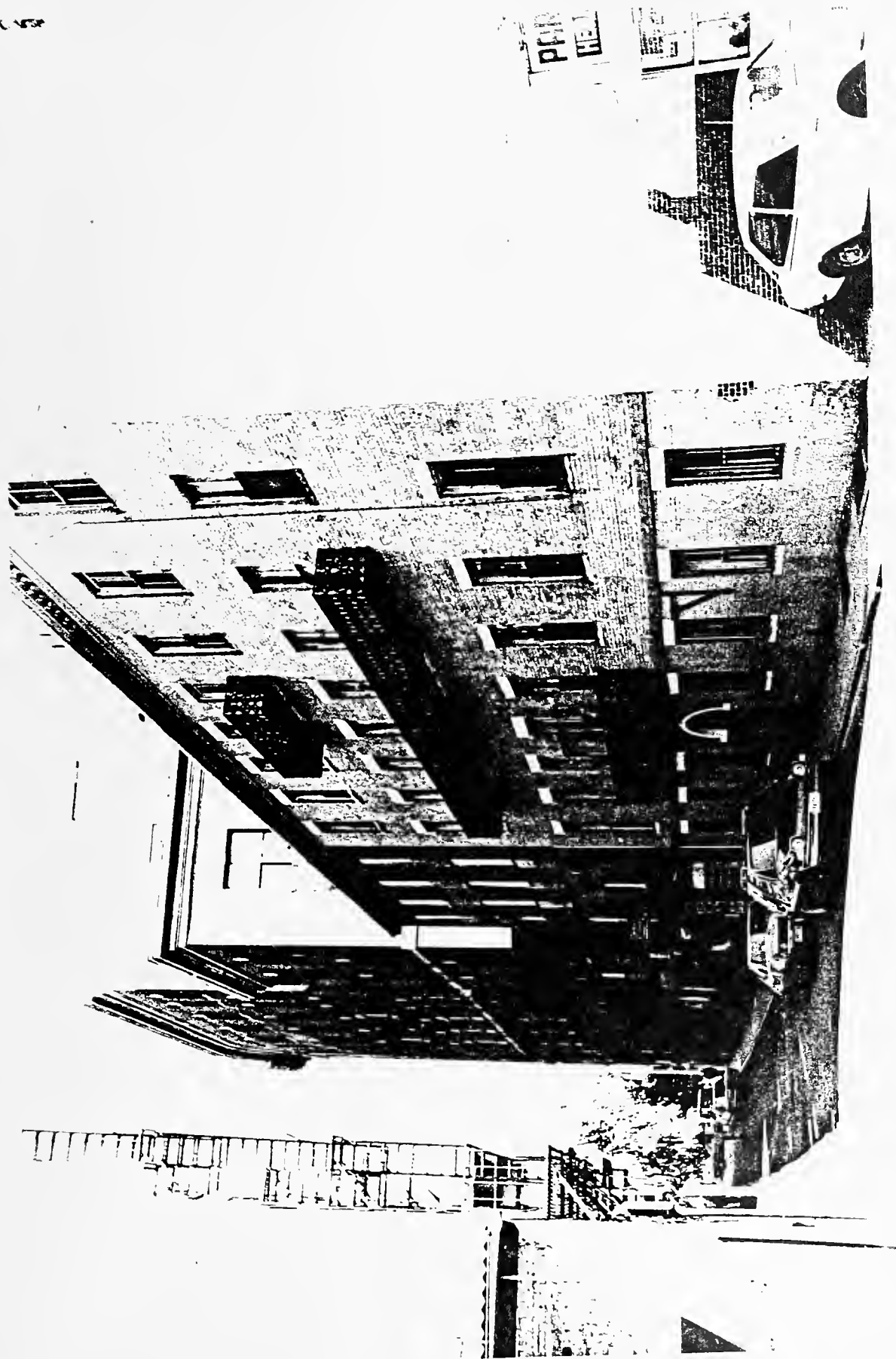
2.2 General Description:

The buildings are 12, 14, and 16 Carver Street are three four-story, four bay brick rowhouses. Built in 1806, they are good examples of the Federal Period style. Each of the buildings displays typical Federal style characteristics: a regular and symmetrical fenestration pattern with slightly shorter top floor windows, a low hip roof, and a delicately detailed dentil cornice. The lintels differ slightly. Number 12 Carver Street has flared brick lintels, while the center building has rectangular stone lintels, and number 16 has flared stone lintels. The buildings are laid up in Flemish bond. The upper floor window sash of the two over two pattern is probably not original; the remaining six over six ground floor sash are all covered by protective iron grates.

Entrance to numbers 14 and 16 is reached through a round arched tunnel which is fitted with an ornamental iron gate. The entry arch is punctuated by a keystone and impost blocks. Immediately above the keystone and the flared lintels of 16 Carver Street is a brick belt course. The ornamental iron balconies symmetrically placed on the upper stories of numbers 14 and 16 are of unknown but probably 19th century origin. In plan, the buildings are rectangular with rear ell.

Alterations to the 12 Carver Street facade are extensive. The lower two floors have been stuccoed and all but two of the seven windows have been remodeled. Four of these have been enlarged and are fitted with glass block, and a fifth was lengthened to become a fire escape door. The entrance has been covered by a rolling metal overhead door. The alterations to the rest of the row are limited. The upper floor window sash has been replaced, and the buildings have been painted light gray with white trim. The entrance to number 16 has been bricked in, but the round stone architrave, impost blocks, and keystone, matching its mate at number 14, remain.

2.3 Photographs: attached.



12, 14, 16 CARVER STREET
view from S

1978 photo by R.P. Burke



12, 14, 16 CARVER STREET
view from N

1978 photo by R. P. BARKER

3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTIES

3.1 Historic Associations

The Carver Street row consists of the oldest surviving structures in the Park Square area. They were built on Carver Street, laid out in 1803 off of the previously existing (1706) Boylston Street. In December 1804, Isaac P. Davis, a ropemaker, conveyed two parcels of land to James Bolter, a housewright, for \$4,840. One of these was the parcel on which the three buildings now stand, and the other one was immediately adjacent to it on the south. Bolter, in August, 1806, sold two-thirds of the first parcel to Ebenezer T. Andrews, a book seller, for \$7,240.00. This contained two buildings of a block of three dwelling houses "lately erected by the said Bolter", namely 14 and 16 Carver Street. The following year, 1807, Andrews acquired the third building, number 12, from Bolter for \$3,820. These conveyances indicate that the row was built in 1805-06. Other residential buildings lined the street, which became paved in 1818, and fitted with lights in 1821. The gradual conversion of the street and surrounding area to largely commercial uses occurred during the later 19th century.

3.2 Architectural Significance

The buildings at 12, 14 and 16 Carver Street are examples of Boston's Federal Period in architecture. They were built at a time when much building and real estate speculation was occurring largely because of renewed confidence and Post-Revolution economic prosperity. The first two decades of the 19th century saw Boston transform visually from a town to a city. A primary force behind this shift was Charles Bulfinch. As an architect working in concert with the developers of the day, Uriah Cotting and Harrison Gray Otis, to name two, or as an independent developer, Bulfinch designed most of the major building projects of the era -- the State House of 1795, the Tontine Crescent of 1793-95, the various Otis Houses, 1796, 1800 and 1805-6, remodeling of Faneuil Hall in 1805, India Wharf of 1803-07, and the Mill Pond filling of 1807. His personal architectural style was seen throughout Boston and inspired numerous other architects of the day, such as Asher Benjamin. Bulfinch influenced the host of housewright/builders who, in imitating and modifying Bulfinch's designs to suit more limited construction budgets, created the many streetscapes of vernacular Federal Style buildings. Such structures, exemplified by 12-16 Carver Street and many others throughout Boston, display definite stylistic features: two to four

Numbers 140, 173, 298½-302 Essex Street, 4-10 Central Street, and 6-26 Front Street are several representative examples in Salem, which is the region's chief Federal style center outside of Boston. The vernacular type is found as far north as Market Street in Newburyport and in downtown sections of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. and to the south in Providence, Rhode Island.

A comparative group, considerably larger, exists in New York City, and now is being preserved as the South Street Seaport Museum. Ada Louise Huxtable, in Classic New York (p. 34) describes the row, 1811-12, on the south side of Fulton Street, starting at 2-18 South Street, as follows:

"Its history is similar (to her previously discussed Pecks Slip) and its style marks are the same. All except the first, with a later top floor and roof, and number 12, with an added story, retain the original four stories and pitched roofs with early splayed lintels and Flemish bond brick."

This description could easily apply to the Carver Street row or other examples, such as the Broad Street Associates Buildings.

Although the Carver Street Buildings are early examples of the Federal Style and have rarely found Federal Style features, such as the round arch entry tunnel and a four bay facade (instead of the more customary three-bay rowhouse facade), the buildings overall are not unique or rare in Boston, the Commonwealth or the New England Region.

3.3 Relation to Criteria for Landmark Designation

The three buildings have unquestioned architectural historical merit. The question is whether this merit is sufficient to meet the regional or national significance required by Section Two of Chapter 772. After consideration of the salient characteristics of the Federal Style and its subtle variations of the breadth of Federal Style architectural development in Boston and cities and towns in the Commonwealth and the New England Region, of the extent of preservation of Federal period architecture in these places, it is concluded that:

Numbers 12, 14 and 16 Carver Street are structures that are representative of elements of architectural design and of craftsmanship which embodies distinctive characteristics of a type valuable for study of a period and style, but that the buildings do not have social, historical, architectural, cultural, or aesthetic significance to the New England Region

or the nation.

The buildings do appear to meet the criteria for designation as and fit the definition of an architectural conservation district, for which the buildings need have significance only to the city. However, Chapter 772 does not permit designation of districts in the region of Boston in which the houses sit, so any formal evaluation of their significance related to those criteria is moot.

4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS

4.1 Assessed Value

The three Carver Street buildings until the fall of 1978 were assessed and taxed as follows:

Building	Area*	Evaluation		Total	Tax
		Land	Building		
12 Carver	1468	\$5,800	\$12,200	\$18,000	\$4,552.20
14 Carver	1400	\$6,000	\$15,000	\$21,000	\$5,310.90
16 Carver	1200	\$9,000	\$19,000	\$28,000	\$7,081.20

*Parcel Area in Square Feet

4.2 Ownership

The 14 and 16 Carver Street buildings until October 1978 were owned by the same entity, the Bobson Realty Trust, Robert S. Mitchell, Trustee, 29 Bowdoin Street, Boston. The 12 Carver Street building until August 1978 was owned by Roland M. LaChance at 12 Carver Street, Boston. At these dates the buildings were acquired by the State Department of Public Works.

4.3 Other

The value of the property is affected by the Park Plaza Urban Renewal Plan, which calls for the removal of these buildings to make space for the proposed State Transportation Building. The effect of the Urban Renewal Plan on the buildings is discussed in Section 5.0, Planning Context.

5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

5.1 Background

The overriding planning consideration affecting the future of the three Carver Street houses is the Park Plaza Urban Renewal Project, whose State office building is intended to stand in part on the site of the houses.

The Park Plaza plan has been the urban renewal controversy of the 1970's, much as the West End plan was the controversy of the 1950's and Charlestown was that of the 1960's. Announced in 1970, the plan involved 6 million square feet of new construction in an area bounded roughly by Stuart, Arlington, Boylston and Tremont Streets. Five towers were to rise in this area, with the highest 650 feet, and two directly fronting the Public Garden on Boylston Street. The density and height of the development, required in the view of the Boston Redevelopment Authority because no Federal urban renewal money was available for acquisition, relocation and demolition, was the source of serious local opposition. The city approved the plan in 1971, but the State Department of Community Affairs rejected the plan in 1972, and again when it was resubmitted in 1973.

On March 5, 1974, the State approved the urban renewal plan subject to the completion of a building mass, use and location study to be incorporated into a supplemental environmental impact report.

For the next twenty-one months, the BRA, its consultants, the BRA Design Advisory Committee, and the Civic Advisory Committee - representing 13 community organizations - identified and evaluated the potential adverse impacts of alternative development programs for the proposed renewal project. The study focussed in particular on the potential effects of wind, shadow and traffic circulation on the Common and Public Garden.

As a result of the environmental review, the BRA altered the Park Plaza Project in several ways. The density of the project was reduced from 6 million square feet to 2.3 million square feet. The number of towers was reduced from five to one, with the maximum height of the tower being 300 feet. Another change provided for the retention of the complete Boylston Street frontage; the original plan had called for new construction along Boylston from Charles Street to Boylston Place. (See Figure 1).

PARK PLAZA: ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN

Sept. 1976

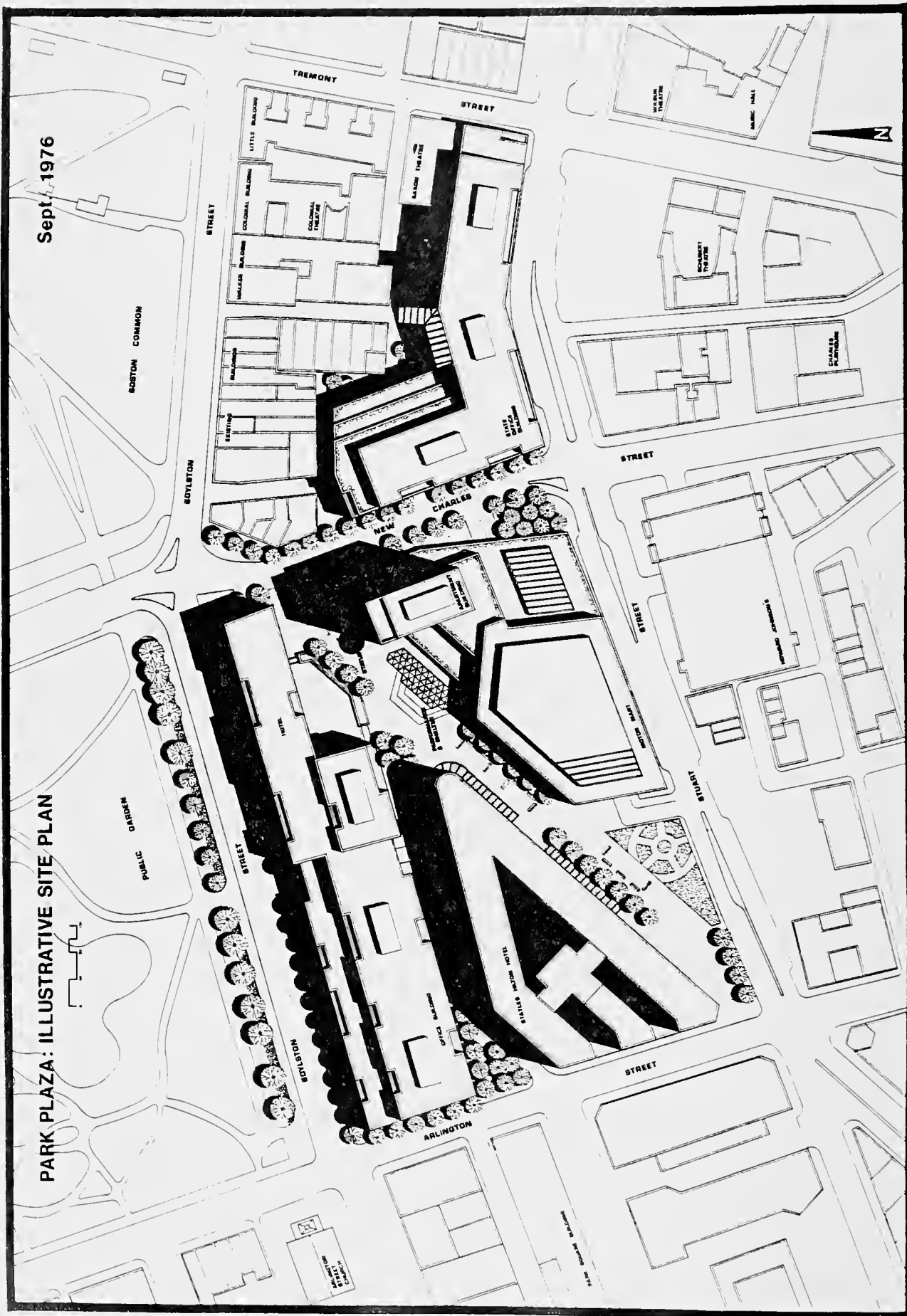


FIGURE 1

As a result of the changes in the urban renewal plan, the project shifted from one which was to be developed by the private sector to one in which public sector involvement became key.

In 1975, the Commonwealth initiated a proposal to construct a new office building to house transportation and public works departments. This would make it possible for the State to absorb some of the cost of acquisition in the project area, thus allowing the desired lower density while keeping the project economically feasible. It is this transportation building which is intended to occupy the site of the Carver Street buildings. (Figure II).

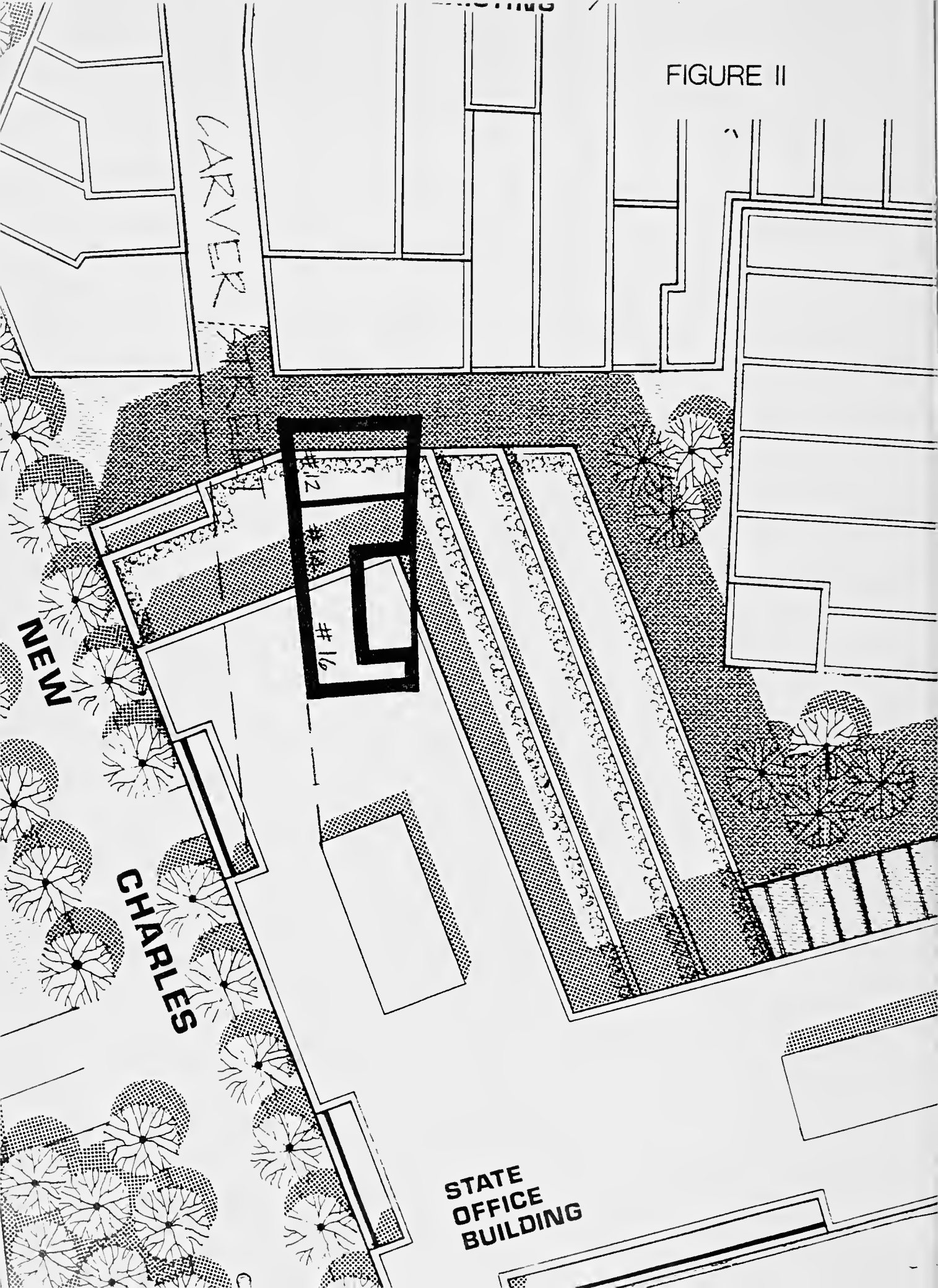
As part of the planning process for the Park Plaza Project, consideration was given to the potential impact of the project on the "built character" of the area, in particular to buildings of "unique quality". The Supplemental Environmental Impact Report for Park Plaza mentions the buildings at 12-14-16 Carver Street as remaining from at least the period of the 1814 Hales Map of Boston. But the report suggests that the buildings in the project area are not individually unique and lack the identity of a cohesive district. Subsequent planning for the State Transportation building has consistently placed a higher priority on minimizing the overall mass of the 870,000 square foot building than retaining the buildings at 12-14 and 16 Carver Street.

In December of 1977, the Park Plaza Urban Renewal Project received final approval from the Boston City Council. While the private developer had pulled out of the project by this time, the Commonwealth has proceeded with the transportation building. Funding for the project has been approved by the Legislature. The buildings on Carver Street, along with other buildings on the site, have been acquired, and the occupants relocated, pending clearance of the site. Construction on site preparation for the new building is scheduled to begin in September, 1979. On April 4, 1979 the Governor sent a letter to the Mass. Dept. of Public Works asking that the project be expedited, thus disposing the last question concerning the status of the project.

5.2 Current Planning Issues

BRA and Department of Transportation staff have continually asserted that it is not possible to build the proposed transportation building while leaving the Carver Street buildings in place. Therefore, in response to the petition for Landmark designation for 12, 14 and 16 Carver Street, and the Boston Landmarks Commission's willingness to consider the designation of the buildings to the extent of preparing a study report, the BRA and the State Department

FIGURE II



of Public Works have attempted to locate a developer who would be willing to move the Carver Street buildings to another site. The BRA staff were prepared to offer a parcel of land in the nearby South Cove Urban Renewal Project at a token cost to a developer. The buildings would be offered at no cost by the State.

On June 1, 1978, BRA architect James Boulger inspected the buildings and concluded that the cost of moving the buildings to a nearby site would be \$70 - \$100,000, and that the total cost of the project, including rehabilitation, would be approximately \$300,000, excluding the two wings. This would amount to \$30.00 per square foot of cost for finished space.

Between February and September of 1978, four developers and two architects experienced in rehabilitation of historic buildings were contacted to solicit interest in the project of moving and rehabilitating 12, 14 and 16 Carver Street. These developers were:

Mark Goldweitz
Carl Lizio
Dan Walker (Commonwealth Design Assoc.)
Roger Webb (Architectural Heritage Foundation)
Si Mintz (Mintz Associates)
Neil St. John Raymond (Raymond Cattle Co.)

None of these persons were interested in undertaking the project. Several indicated that they felt the project was economically infeasible.

5.3 Current Zoning

The 12 Carver Street building and most of the 14 Carver Street building are located in the B-10 Zone; the remaining portion of 14 Carver and all of 16 Carver are in a B-8 Zone.

Both zones are general business districts, allowing an assortment of commercial institutional and residential uses, and generally prohibiting manufacturing of any type. The B-10 Zone allows a floor area ratio of up to 10; the B-8 Zone allows FAR up to 8.

6.1 Alternatives:

The Landmarks Commission has four alternative courses of action: designation of the three buildings as a unit as a Landmark; designation of the buildings as three individual Landmarks; nomination of the buildings for listing in the National Register of Historic Places; and not designating. Another alternative, the designation of the structures as a Landmark District or Architectural Conservation District (the latter requiring a lesser level of significance than Landmark or Landmark District), is precluded by the Commission's enabling act which prohibits designation in downtown Boston east of Massachusetts Avenue and north of the Massachusetts Turnpike.

6.2 Impact of Alternatives:

Listing of the buildings in the National Register of Historic Places would provide limited protection from federal or federally-licensed or -assisted actions having an adverse effect of the properties. The mechanism, as described in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, provides the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation with the opportunity to review and comment on federal undertakings with potential effect on historic property. National Register listing would also provide various federal income tax incentives for rehabilitation and disincentives for demolition under the provisions of the Tax Reform Act of 1976 and the Revenue Act of 1978. The listing would not, however, protect the buildings from demolition or alteration undertaken with private or non-federal funds.

Landmarks designation under Chapter 772 would require the review of physical changes to the buildings' exteriors, in accordance with standards and criteria adopted as part of the designation. It would not affect the buildings' use or treatment of the buildings' interiors unless the latter were protected by a separate interior designation.

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission finds that singly or together the buildings at 12, 14, and 16 Carver Street do not meet the criteria for Landmark designation as found in Sections 2 and 4 of Chapter 772, Acts of 1975, for the reasons cited in Section 3 of this study report. The buildings would meet the criteria for designation as an Architectural Conservation District requiring a lesser degree of significance, but as noted above the Commission may not make such a designation in this area of Boston.

Because the staff does not recommend designation of 12, 14, and 16 Carver Street, no recommendation for Standards and Criteria are attached.

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